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Unveiling of Matters: The Role of Investigative Journalism in Uncovering Corruption in the Arab World

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Abstract

This study investigates types of corruption that had been revealed by investigative reports during the last 3 years and their impact on social, legislative, and other aspects of life. It surveys 145 reports achieved and published by Arab investigative journalists from Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Bahrain, Palestine, Mauritania, Algeria, Kuwait, and Sudan. Investigative reports address serious issues of corruption ranging from bottom level of the society up to top level of the authority. Yet it is the strongest journalistic tools for revealing and combating corruption. The Panama Papers reports reveal cross-border corruption and offshore companies for top-tier politicians and powerful people. The study concludes that the top four dominant corruption issues include administrative and financial issues, legislative and judiciary issues, abuse of power and political influence, and medical issues. The study also explores difficulties that are facing investigative journalism in the Arab world and the future of this type of journalism as well.

Keywords: corruption, Arab world, investigative journalism, story-based inquiry, Panama Papers

1. Introduction

Corruption is a complex phenomenon and a difficult problem in all around the world. It is complex because of its deep roots in the social, cultural, economic, political, legal, and ethical value systems of individuals, communities, cultures, and countries ([1], p. 153).

Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” [2]. It includes [3]:

A: Dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

B: Inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means

It is not exaggeration to say that corruption in the Arab world is the common factor that stands behind major problems faced by its countries. It increases poverty ratio and multiplies agony and suffering of Arab people.

Corruption in the Arab world seems to be a chronic and progressive disease that turns to epidemic in some Arab countries. This is due to the lack of democratic system that allows for equal citizenship, equal opportunities, social justice, human

right, dignity, transparency, and accountability. Despite the political changes that shook the Arab region on 2011, corruption has not witnessed any improvement. On the contrary, the majority of Arab countries have failed to fulfill the will of the people to build democratic systems allowing for greater transparency and accountability [4].

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2016, 90% of the Arab countries have scored below 50, which is a failing grade. Five out of the 10 most corrupt countries in the world are from the following regions: Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, and Syria [4]. Those countries are also inflicted with political instability, war, internal conflicts, and terrorism, stressing the fact that war and conflict fuel corruption and in particular political corruption [4]. Moreover, they in specific have occupied these ranks throughout the year 2012–2016, followed by Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, and Lebanon ranking from 108 to 136. Only the United Arab Emirates and Qatar which occupy 24 and 31 ranks, respectively, other Arab countries fall within 70–90 ranks in this index [5].

The failure to fight corruption explains the sharp drop of most of the Arab countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2016. The hope for Arab countries to fight corruption and end impunity has not seen any progress yet [5].

2. Investigative journalism and corruption in the Arab world

Investigative journalism (IJ) is a form of journalism in which reporters go in-depth to investigate a single story that may uncover corruption, review government policies or of corporate houses, or draw attention to social, economic, political, or cultural trends ([6], p. 7) as well as loopholes in legislation and legal articles. It involves exposing to the public matters that are concealed—either deliberately by someone in a position of power or accidentally—behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding ([7], p. 8).

Investigative journalism is a new phenomenon in the Arab world. During the last two decades, an important shift has occurred in this type of journalism in the Arab world led, mainly, by efforts of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ).¹ These reports had covered different aspects and tackled serious issues ranging from political, social, health, legislative, administrative, financial, educational, environmental, and other issues. These efforts have created new culture of story-based inquiry journalism in many Arab countries, like Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and other countries. Many investigative reports had been achieved including written, audio, and video reports. However, majority of these reports were produced for print and online journalism.

Journalism in general and investigative reporting in specific play a vital role in raising awareness about corruption and combating it. They are among the most important sources of public awareness raising on corruption. However, investigative journalism is very challenging. Of thousands of journalists around the globe, only a few of them select this profession and decide to be investigative journalists.

¹ Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) is the first and leading media organization in the region dedicated to promoting investigative journalism in Arab newsrooms, which is still a new practice. It was formed in early 2005 to support independent quality professional journalism, through funding in-depth journalism projects and offering training and media coaching. ARIJ helps journalists working in print, radio, TV, and online media in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Palestine, Yemen, and Tunisia. For more information, visit <https://en.arij.net/site-message>.

3. Panama Papers

The Panama Papers represents one of the milestone successes of IJ to reveal some corruption of prominent figures in the Arab world including heads of states. A group of Arab journalists has been working secretly in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Algeria, and Yemen as part of a global network of investigative reporters mining the so-called Panama Papers [8]. The investigation lasted a year and shows how influential people—including 12 heads of state—have used shell companies to avoid tax, launder money, and dodge sanctions. Those people implicated through family or associate's involvement in offshore accounts include former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Bashar al-Assad, and Libya's late leader Muammar Gaddafi [9].

4. Challenges and future of IJ in the Arab world

As mentioned earlier, IJ is a new phenomenon in the Arab world. During the last decades, Arabic newspapers are full of conventional reporting but not investigative reporting, which is different in the whole process. Type of research, source relations, and outcomes are completely different in both types of conventional reporting and IJ. Hunter lists 14 differences ([6], pp. 8–10) between conventional reporting and investigative journalism. Those differences relate to the process of research, source relations, and outcomes. Unlike the conventional reporting, information in IJ cannot be published until it is completed, research is continued, and documentation is required. Relations with sources are not good in most of the time, official information are hidden from the reporter who may challenge the official version, and sources are often cannot be identified for the sake of their security. Regarding outcomes, investigative journalist refuses to accept the world as it is, and the dramatic structure of the story is essential to its impact.

Indeed a decisive alteration in IJ starts with the foundation of ARIJ in 2005. With grants from international donors, ARIJ has been able to provide professional and financial supports as well as legal support. This implies that IJ has not embedded in the Arab journalism yet. Unfortunately, ARIJ supports for journalists have been affected in the recent years due to shortage of financial support from the international donors. More cut of such support will affect IJ in the Arab world in the short run and may jeopardize it in the long run.

International donors' support plays a crucial role in terms of enabling investigative journalism in developing countries to operate. Oyedele et al.'s study has confirmed that foreign media assistance has an impact on independent media's workings and journalists' performance in Nigeria. The study has shown that media organizations and journalists can only improve on their reportage of critical national sociopolitical issues when there is support from donors [10].

A serious challenge is related to freedom of expression in the Arab world, which has been declining in the recent years. A good piece of investigative report, like *Death in Military Service*, which took 2 years of journalistic work could not be broadcasted in Egypt. Television channels and newspapers that used to publish or broadcast this type of reporting had refused to broadcast it due to its "sensitivity"!

The other dire challenge facing IJ in the Arab world relates to the increased challenges that print journalism as a professional is facing today. Majority of IJ achieved by Arab investigative journalists are in print format, which eliminate their exposures and accordingly their impact on popular and official levels.

5. What is story-based inquiry?

Story-based inquiry is the story that begins by formulating the story the reporter hopes to write as a hypothesis that will be verified or disproved ([6], p. 2). Hypothesis is the fundamental and spirit of the story-based inquiry. This method helps reporters to identify the dimensions of their stories that they want to investigate and reveal their secret. However, developing a preliminary hypothesis for a story is not a fantasy or “guessing at the unknown.” It is rather developed based on reporter’s profound knowledge on the issue that result from deep and serious research.

Once hypothesis is developed, the next step is to analyze the hypothesis. By analyzing a hypothetical story, reporter can identify dimensions of the story and its boundaries. Hypothesis gives reporters something to verify and increase their chances of discovering secrets. It makes investigative project easier to manage and guarantees that reporter will deliver a story, not just a mass of data. Furthermore, hypothesis enables closer insight into whether the story meets legal and ethical criteria ([6], pp. 8, 16).

6. Literature review

Investigative journalism has gained a good attention from researchers. However, Arabic studies in this field are still lagging behind. This could be explained by the recency of investigative journalism practice as profession as well as lack of professional investigative journalists. Previous related studies explored this journalism from different approaches including its role in combating corruption, obstacles, and challenges investigative reporters are facing as well as from ethics perspective.

Pollack and Allern investigated the work of and methods used by investigative journalists in revealing large-scale corruption related to the expansion of Nordic telecom companies in Uzbekistan. They found that investigative journalists have played a crucial role in the disclosure of corruption, sometimes cooperating across media organizations and countries, demonstrating the importance of journalism as a public good for democracy [11].

Suntai and Shem [12] concluded in their study on tackling institutional corruption through investigative journalism that this type of journalism has the potency of combating corrupt practices in Nigeria. According to authors, it could mitigate and eliminate corrupt practices in the Nigerian society [12].

Investigative journalism is a difficult profession, and, therefore, it faces many obstacles in many times, many countries, and almost everywhere. Rabei’s study [13] of Egyptian investigative journalism is the first of its kind. It investigated the current situation of the practice of investigative journalism in the Egyptian press, problems faced by investigative journalists, as well as the future of this journalism. Findings confirmed the negative effects of the press law in Egypt on investigative journalism. The laws have not only restricted the practice of investigative journalists’ work but have not provided protection for them as well. As for the future of the investigative journalism, professional and academic elites stressed that the current political situation in Egypt relays on one strong political hegemony that will not encourage free flow of information, and, hence, it does not support investigative journalism [13]. These results are in line with the study’s findings of Arabic Network for Media Support (2016) in which investigative journalists identified absence of law regulates the freedom of information circulation and lack of resources represent the major obstacle of investigative journalism in Egypt ([14], p. 6).

Abu-Hassan investigated attitudes of Palestinian journalists toward the practice of investigative journalism. Findings revealed that the most important obstacles facing investigative journalists were self-fear of difficulty to complete investigative reports and fear of security prosecution or to be prosecuted by the influential people. Administrative obstacles included sources in the public institutions fear to speak freely as well as lack of financial resources. The absence of laws, which protect journalists from prosecution, was one of the most important legal obstacles that have hindered journalists from effectively practicing investigative journalism in Palestine [15].

On the contrary, Lanosga and Houston explored the future of investigative reporting through a survey of 861 investigative journalists in the United States. Accordingly to findings, respondents reported high perception of autonomy and job satisfaction and confirmed resources for investigative reporting are maintaining and even increasing [16].

Gerli et al. investigated constraints and limitations faced by investigative journalism through the analysis of selected case studies of corruptive phenomena in Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Latvia. They found that this type of journalism does not work actually in the observed countries. According to findings, investigative journalism requires certain socioeconomic conditions, such as a low degree of influence of the political and economic spheres and a high level of journalistic professionalism, which are not always present in the aforementioned countries. Authors identified three factors that may affect investigative journalists' works: a certain proximity of publishers and politicians, advertising pressure, and the interferences of secret services [17].

Singh assessed the general state of investigative journalism in seven Pacific Island countries and found that this journalism suffers from harsher legislation, beatings, and harassment of journalists as well as false charges and lawsuits that target them in these countries [18].

Yusha'u 2009 identified the obstacles that are faced by investigative journalism in Nigeria which impede uncovering of corruption. According to results, clientelism is a feature of journalism practice and one of the factors that impedes the practice of investigative journalism. Other impediments include poor remuneration, bad working conditions, corruption within the media, and the relationship between publishers and politicians [19].

From ethical perspective, Fahkana investigated Palestinian journalists' attitudes toward investigative journalism ethics in Palestine and the extent to which the journalists are committed to the investigative journalism ethics. The study concluded that journalists should maintain the confidentiality of the investigation-related information sources. Reliance on secret sound recording and video tapping is justified only if work circumstances and the difficulty in gathering information require such act. The journalists highly approved that the investigative journalists might disguise to access information and to attain the required objective [20].

Yet, the current study aims to add to this literature from Arabic perspective. Using content analysis of recent and 2-year-long reports provides evidence-based results on the role played by IJ in combating corrupting in the Arab world.

7. Scope and methodology

The main objective of this study is to identify how IJ combats corruption in the Arab world. Research questions for this study are as follows:

- Is there a place for IJ in the Arab world?
- What type of corruption investigative reports tackled during the study period?

- Which Arab countries' investigative reports tackled during the study period?
- How investigative reports tackled corruption in the Arab countries during the study period?

ARIJ website was selected for this study. The study's population constitutes all archived and retrieved investigative reports from 2010 to 2018. A comprehensive sample of the population was selected for this study. It covers all reports published from 2016 to 2018. One hundred fourth-five reports were retrieved on September 2018 from ARIJ website using Google search engine. The author believes this is a sufficient sample to provide us with, at least, indications on how IJ contributes to combating corruption. The selected period of the sample provides the most recent corruption issues tackled by investigative reports, particularly the Panama Papers, which represents cross-border corruption. Bearing in mind, investigative reports need months to be achieved and sometimes a year or more, like "*Moot fi alkema*" or Death in Military Service, which according to BBC website lasted for 2 years [21].

Selecting ARIJ for implementing the study refers to the role it plays in this genre of journalism. It is a nongovernmental and prominent association when it comes to IJ works in the Arab world. ARIJ is the only specialized and dedicated association in IJ including training. Almost all active investigative reporters in the Arab world are affiliate to this association and had been trained by them.

The study uses content analysis to answer research questions. Content categories along with code sheet were used guided by the operational definitions of issues. The content categories are comprised of the following corruption issues: administrative and financial, legislative and judiciary, abuse of power and political influence, medical, environmental and agricultural, and educational.

8. Operational definitions

- Administrative and financial issues within this study can refer to any administrative act of breaching the rules and regulations designed for private gain [22]. It includes all types of governmental and private officials' violations or failure to activate and implement indorsed rules and regulations. Examples of such issue are as follows: fraud, bribery, smuggling, money laundering, exploitation labor, negligence of performing duties, waste of public money, absence of control, lack of safety procedures, and other issues related to administration and financial.
- Abuse of power and political influence refers to improper use of authority by someone who has that authority because he or she holds a public office [23].
- Medical corruption includes all types of illegal and/or unethical practice and medical errors committed intentionally or unintentionally by doctors or medical practitioners causing damage to other people.
- Environmental corruption is defined as problems with the planet's systems (air, water, soil, etc.) that have developed because of human interference or mistreatment of the planet [24].
- Educational corruption is "the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of

educational goods and services, and, has impact on access, quality or equity in education” [25].

9. Finding

9.1 Corruption issues in the investigative reports

Table 1 includes different types of corruption that investigative reports tackled during the period from 2016 to 2018. The top four dominant issues of the six corruption issues include administrative and financial, legislative and judiciary, abuse of power and political influence, and medical issues. These issues occupy 89.6% of the total issues of corruptions that investigative reports addressed.

Bear in mind that corruption issues are overlapping and intertwined at many times particularly when it comes to abuse of power and political influence that stand behind many financial corruption issues in Arab countries. Another example of the overlapping is procuring prohibited drug from pharmacies without a proper drug prescription which is a medical violation. However, absence of control, weak of monitoring and conflict between official regulatory and supervisory bodies contribute to this practice. Such overlapping applies to many cases of issues of corruption these reports investigated. Yet the author classified issues to major fault and shortage that allow corruption practices to occur.

9.2 Type of corruption based on Arab countries

According to the data in **Table 2**, Egyptian investigative journalists achieved the highest number of investigative reports tackling corruption in Egypt with 31% of total ratio of investigative reports followed by Yemeni journalists with 17.9%. Tunisian investigative journalists occupied the third rank with 8.3%, followed by investigative journalists from Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan in the same rank. Joint works by a group of Arab journalists came in the sixth rank with 5.5%. Minor marriage in Egypt, Yemen and Lebanon is an example of this type of joint works. The Panama Papers, which will come next, is the prominent achievement of this work. Reports on corruption issues in Iraq and Bahrain occupied seventh place with 4.8% for each. Palestinian investigative journalists came in the eight rank with 4.1%. Other Arab countries including Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan, and Mauritania occupy lowest position.

According to investigative reports, corruption issues in the Arab countries were ranked as follows:

No.	Type of corruption	No.	Percent
1.	Administrative and financial	44	30.3
2.	Legislative and judiciary	41	28.3
3.	Abuse of power and political influence	26	17.9
4.	Medical	19	13.1
5.	Environmental and agricultural	10	6.9
6.	Educational	5	3.4
Total		145	100

Table 1.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in the Arab world from 2016 to 2018.

No.	Type of corruption	Countries											Total
		Egypt	Yemen	Tunisia	Syria	Lebanon	Jordan	More than one country	Iraq	Bahrain	Palestine	Other countries	
1.	Administrative and financial	16	4	3	2	1	2	7	3	2	2	2	44
2.	Legislative and judiciary	11	9	6	1	4	5	1	1	2		1	41
3.	Abuse of power and political influence	2	6	0	5	4	2		3	1	1	2	26
4.	Medical	6	6	2	2					2	1		19
5.	Environmental and agricultural	6		1	1						2		10
6.	Educational	4	1										5
Total		45	26	12	11	9	9	8	7	7	6	5	145
Percent		31	17.9	8.3	7.6	6.2	6.2	5.5	4.8	4.8	4.1	3.4	100
Rank		1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7	7	8	9	—

Table 2.
Investigative reports on corruption issues based on Arab countries from 2016 to 2018.

- In Egypt, administrative and financial issues occupy the first rank, followed by legislative and judiciary issues, medical issues, environmental issues, and educational issues.
- For Yemen, legislative and judiciary issues occupy the first rank, followed by medical issues, abuse of power and political influence issues, and administrative and financial issues.
- In Tunisia, legislative and judiciary issues come in the first rank, followed by administrative and financial issues and then medical issues.
- While for Syria, abuse of power and political influence occupy the first rank, followed by administrative and financial issues and then medical issues.
- In Lebanon, abuse of power and political influence occupy the first rank, followed by legislative and judiciary issues.
- For Jordan, legislative and judiciary issues came in the first rank, followed by abuse of power and political influence and then administrative and financial issues.
- Abuse of power and political influence occupy the first rank for Iraq, followed by administrative and financial issues.

Legislative and judiciary issues are common among Yemen, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Jordan, while abuse of power and political influence issues are very common among Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

9.3 Corruption issues based on Arab countries

Tables 3–13 (Appendix) include different types of corruption issues based on Arab countries. The following are some examples of these corruptions:

- Administrative and financial corruption: tax evasion, money laundering, and smuggling of weapons, drugs, and diesel. Commercial fraud and absence of control led to, for instance, recycling used tires in Egypt, selling relief materials in Yemen, as well as selling expired gas cylinders and spread of unlicensed gas stations. Construction fraud, wasting public fund, and selling professional titles “Judge” in Egypt in return for attending training workshops. Secret immigration to Europe due to loopholes in Egyptian and Greek airports and Egyptian government failure to manage loan from the World Bank deprived seven villages from sanitation. Neglecting victims and injuries of revolution in Egypt and Tunisia, forged residency permits in Egypt, and some child care centers in Egypt mistreated and expelled children to the street, exacerbating homelessness. Some Egyptian preachers exploit mosques to hatch ISIS children, granting pension fund’s apartments to eligible persons in Tunisia, as well as telecommunication towers randomly spread regardless of safety measures. Journalists in Iraq killed, for instance, by ISIS sniper, due to lack of safety measures. Marginalized communities’ negligence, victims of crossroads of railways, lack of safety measure in transportation railway in Tunisia, as well as facilitating movement of citizens with disabilities is not being fully implemented.
- Legislative and judiciary: torture in Tunisia; slavery still exists in Yemen; minor marriage in Egypt, Yemen, and Lebanon; exchange marriage in Yemen; Syria’s

fatherless children; ISIS children; children without pedigree; depriving females from inheritance; no financial and moral compensation provisions for time falsely spent in jail; and pretrial detention for punishing political opponents. Public prosecution could renew this kind of detention as many times as he wishes. An investigative report conducted in Egypt documented a case of such punishment in which a young man had been prisoned for 14 months before releasing him and drubbing the case due to insufficient evidences. An Egyptian court in Cairo has renewed the detention of Al Jazeera journalist, Mahmoud Hussein, for the 17th time. Until December 12, 2018, he has been in prison in Egypt for more than 661 days despite not being charged [26]. Weak law enforcement of child custody judgments doubles the suffering of divorced mothers due to depriving them from custody of their children. Egyptian government violates constitution by allowing using coal in industry. Children sexual abuse, child molestation, rape of children and its psychological damage, as well as children execution under 16 years of age. An investigative report documented children excursion in Saudi Arabia and Yemen for committed crimes when they were less than 16 years old despite the two countries signed the Treaty of Child Rights. According to the reports, more than 222 children are facing murder cases in 12 Yemeni governorates. “Seasonal workers” are labor outside of law protection, exploitation of domestic workers including sex trade, marital rape, placing detainees in tiny spaces “inch and something”, recruiting children and failure to enforce the law deprives persons with special needs of their rights. Current Jordanian electoral system does not achieve justice between the kingdom’s departments, unlicensed slaughterhouses, and tax havens violating international law in Yemen. An investigative report conducted in Egypt tracks the hazards and death Syrian refugees faced in the African Sahara.

- Abuse of power and political influence: The so-called “Swiss Leaks” revealed that the wife of former Egyptian Minister of Tourism had two secret accounts in HSBC Private Bank Suisse SA holding a total of \$3,870,357 between 2006 and 2007 and escaped the Egyptian authorities’ decision to freeze her accounts after the revolution of January 2011. Offshore companies, safe tax havens, food import monopoly, money launderers, and tax exemption. Abuse of power in military has documented that soldiers in the Egyptian Central Security Forces have been abused and possibly killed by their officers. Reportage found evidence of systematic attempts to cover up these violations.
- Medical corruption issues: some doctors remove the wombs of mentally disabled girls with the consent of parents, human trade organ, Yemeni doctors infected with cholera virus due to lack of immunity measures. Renting lab licenses—a popular market in Egypt and the patient pays the price. Merchants of the war, Yemen’s cancer and kidney patients suffering due to lack of medication, sick leave market, illegal abortion, medical errors that lead to disabilities, mental health hospitals in Bahrain have become drug stores, and some medical companies in Egypt in cooperation with international companies conduct illegal clinical excremental. Unlicensed children’s incubators, business production of artificial limbs in the workshops in stairwells, unlicensed clinics in Yemen, and human organ trafficking.
- Environmental corruption: vehicles’ emissions and cutting down trees in Palestine including oak trees and long-standing trees. Coal dust and cement emitted from some factories in Alexandria and noise and air pollution in

Tunis and Egypt. Hazardous wastes and dust loaded with poisonous gases due to interaction with chemical residues that led to death of some people in Egypt.

- Educational corruption: depriving children from right of education, plagiarism in illiteracy tests, failure to integrate children with disability into regular education system, and unlicensed educational centers in Egypt manipulating students and learners by giving them fake certificates attributed to international universities.

9.4 Panama Papers

Apart from international investigation led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and based on the Panama Papers, a group of Arab investigative journalists from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have achieved and published eight investigative reports on 2017 revealing what *The Guardian* [27] called “offshore secret of politicians.” They were able to track activities and deals of 71 Arabic companies in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunis, and Yemen that have financial and commercial with what is known as “Russian Laundromat.” The share of the Arab companies and banks is estimated to be at half a billion dollars of money laundering operations for 20 billion and 800 million dollar worldwide [28].

Corruption issues revealed by those investigative reports and based on the Panama Papers include:

- Ayad Allawi, former Iraqi Prime Minister, ownership of three hidden and tax haven real estate companies.
- Yemen telecom company Mobile Telephone Network is predominantly owned by five offshore companies—most of them owned by Yemeni businessman Shaher Abdualhak.
- Five companies registered in the UAE free zones within the file of the Russian laundry. Iran used one of these companies to evade sanctions.
- Nine Arab companies are involved in the laundering of 10 million dollars in the Russian laundry.
- UAE-based enterprises involved in Russian laundry.
- Laundering 25 million dollars through fake projects and bills.
- Thirteen UAE companies involve in the largest file for the laundering of Russian money.
- Offshore companies for the wife of Chakib Khelil, former Energy Minister in Algeria.
- How the Algerian elite diverted oil money.
- The Panama Papers exposes Yemen’s Wheat Emperor.
- Revealing hidden assets for tax havens through offshore holdings for one of Yemen’s prominent businessmen Mohammad Fahem, known as Yemen’s Wheat Emperor.

- Uncover offshore company owned by Abdul-Hafez Al-Alimi, the son of the former Deputy Prime Minister of Yemen.
- Murder, tax evasion, cronyism: Yemen's Sugar Kings implicated in the Panama Papers revealing how hidden companies controlled by most prominent businessmen in Yemen, the brothers Abdulhak, Shaher, and Abduljalil, have used tax havens and offshore fronts to dodge taxes in Yemen.

10. Discussion

The number of investigative reports achieved and published during the period of the study confirms that there is a place for IJ in the Arab world despite of the tremendous obstacles and difficulties facing this kind of reporting as well as reporters in those countries. For instance, significant number of Egyptian media organizations used to welcome IJ before 2013. Several reports will be published and broadcasted in both print and broadcast media like *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, *Al-Shorouk*, *ALYoum7*, *Al Watan*, *Alsabah*, and ONTV and others (Arabic Network for Media Support 14). In 2010, five investigative journalism units had been established in Jordan, Palestine, and Egypt. Between 2012 and 2013, 13 units had been established in other Arab countries [29]. Moreover, IJ in the Arab world increasingly gets attention from international media and donors.

The role of the media is critical in promoting good governance and controlling corruption. It not only raises public awareness about corruption, its causes, consequences, and possible remedies but also investigates and reports incidences of corruption. Often, reports on corrupt practices by government officials have provided the starting point for a series of consequences such as the launch of investigation or judicial proceedings and resignation, among others. Together with these visible effects, media reporting has also had equally important indirect effects thanks to the role it plays in society ([30], pp. 1–20).

Finding of the study of investigative reports confirms that administrative and financial issues as well as legislative and judiciary issues represent the most prominent corruption that are faced by Arab countries throughout the last decades. Both of them occupied 58% of corruption issues that investigative reports had revealed between 2016 and 2018. Abuse of power and political influence also play an important role in this aspect. According to these reports, more than 17% of corruption were attributed to corrupt politicians and businesspersons having financial relations with those politicians in most cases. Politicians usually provide their business partners with several supports. This include, but are not limited to, political cover of tax evasions and monopoly of import and export of particularly essential goods, as in the case of wheat in Yemen, and natural resources such as oil in Algeria.

Legal system represents one of the pressing issues that need to be reconsidered for any reforming process in the Arab world. For instance, many Arab countries are still lagging behind when it comes to legalizing age of marriage. Therefore, minor marriage is a very common practice in those countries. Legalizing age of marriage at 18 years old will save life of many young girls and prevent a lot of suffering. Remand detention represents one of the flagrant misuses of law for revenge from opponents. Judicial authority may renew prisoner detention as many times as desired! Rule of law, social justice, equal citizenship, and human right are essential for modern and civil state, and these are basic principles that journalism and modern actors should struggle to achieve.

Investigative journalism represents an important opportunity for combating deep-rooted corruption in the Arab world. It is a journalism of verification, deep and long-time research, as well as evidence-based journalism. In highly corrupt

countries, it is advised that journalists change their approaches and be consistent in their pursuit of values, attitudes, and fight against corruption by developing and promoting investigative journalism ([31], p. 34).

Therefore, investment in this type of journalism is worthy and rewarding. This could be through providing financial support especially for those working in the poorest countries, building and developing capacities, as well as providing legal advice, consultancy, and protection for the Arab investigative journalists. This has become extremely important in the current circumstances in which journalism is suffering due to the Internet and technology development. Unfortunately, the audience has keen interest in investigative report findings but is unwilling to pay for its scoops or exposés ([32], p. 1).

Freedom of expressions is very crucial for IJ to grow and flourish. The effectiveness of the media, in turn, depends on access to information and freedom of expression, as well as a professional and ethical framework of investigative journalists ([30], p. 1). In Egypt, investigative reports were doubled seven times in 2011 comparing to 2010 and to 50% in 2014. Moreover, they won many local and regional awards. This could be explained by relative freedom of speech and information circulation after the January 25, 2011 Revolution that led to political regime change ([14], p. 25).

Schools and colleges of journalism need to pay more attention to identify and prepare investigative journalists for tomorrow. These reporters are very rare in the world, let alone the Arab world. Approximately, in every 1000 journalists, there is only one investigative journalist!

Finally, combating corruption in the Arab world needs serious efforts and profound reform in the political system. This reform will not occur without having political will and popular determination.

A. Appendix

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Child Brides in Egypt—Loopholes and Cleric Endorsements	Legislative and judiciary	April 10, 2018
2.	It Hasn't Inferred	Legislative and judiciary	May 9, 2018
3.	The Lost Gold	Agricultural	March 8, 2018
4.	Detained for Good: The Use of Remand Detention as a Punitive Measure Against Political Opponents	Legislative and judiciary	July 15, 2018
5.	Services Offices: Rear Door for Sex Trade and Exploitation of Domestic Workers	Legislative and judiciary	June 19, 2018
6.	“Under Experiment”	Medical	April 18, 2018
7.	In Alko'arah Egyptian Village... Children Dream of School	Educational	May 2, 2018
8.	New Cars from Old Parts	Administrative	January 19, 2018
9.	Children Who Have Been Raped Face Society with Psychological Damage	Legislative and judiciary	December 26, 2017
10.	With Documents: Wasting One Billion and 300 Million Sacks in “Kema Aswan 2”	Administrative	December 19, 2017
11.	Waste Mines	Environmental	January 9, 2017
12.	“Integration on the Papers”	Educational	August 27, 2017
13.	Loopholes in Egyptian and Greek Airports Allow Secret Immigration to Europe	Administrative	May 8, 2017

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
14.	Black Exhale-Coal Dust and Cement Harm Egyptian People Chests	Environmental	May 8, 2017
15.	Incomplete Dreams in “Abu Saed”	Environmental	November 7, 2017
16.	Fraud Accreditation	Educational	October 7, 2017
17.	In the Island of “Sidna Al-Wali,” 5 Thousand Egyptians out of Coverage	Administrative	March 7, 2017
18.	A False Womb	Medical	March 5, 2017
19.	Networks of Preachers Exploit Mosques and Associations to Hatching ISIS “Dawaish Children”	Administrative	March 4, 2017
20.	Noise is a Bitter Reality Inhabitants of “Amir Algousih” Street Suffer	Environmental	March 3, 2017
21.	“Kornit Trip”	Administrative	February 2, 2017
22.	Legalized Marital Rape	Legislative and judiciary	January 29, 2017
23.	Siwa Oasis... Drowning Threatening	Environmental	May 1, 2017
24.	Compensation Rather than Law	Legislative and judiciary	December 29, 2016
25.	A Housewife with Big Swiss Bank Accounts	Abuse of power and political influence	December 20, 2016
26.	A Fatal Mistake	Medical	April 12, 2016
27.	Renting Labs Licenses... A Popular Market and Patient Pays the Price	Medical	February 12, 2016
28.	Towards illiteracy	Educational	November 26, 2016
29.	Egypt’s Ticking Time Bombs in Gas Bottles	Legislative and judiciary	July 11, 2016
30.	Lost Parentage	Legislative and judiciary	May 11, 2016
31.	“Individual Employees” Labor Outside The Protection of the Law	Legislative and judiciary	October 23, 2016
32.	Frozen Hopes and Harsh Laws	Legislative and judiciary	October 10, 2016
33.	Eastern Gate	Refugee hazard	September 25, 2016
34.	Upside Down, The Victims and Injuries of the Revolution in Egypt and Tunisia from the Bright Promises to the Corners of Forgetfulness	Administrative	August 18, 2016
35.	(Official waste) ... Government Failure To Manage World Bank Loan Deprives 7 Villages from Sanitation	Administrative	December 8, 2016
36.	Swiss Leaks Expose Egyptian Mastermind Behind Massive Corruption Deal	Financially	July 23, 2016
37.	Business Production of Artificial Limbs in Workshops under Stairwell	Medical	July 17, 2016
38.	“The Stolen Innocent”.. Doctors Remove the Wombs of Mentally Disabled Girls with Parents Consent	Medical	March 7, 016
39.	When Child Care Homes... Feed In “Homeless”	Administrative	November 5, 2016
40.	Death in Military Service	Military	May 2, 2016
41.	Death by Remote Control	Administrative	January 28, 2016
42.	Titles for Sale	Administrative	January 27, 2016

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
43.	Forged Residency Permits	Administrative	January 26, 2016
44.	A Decorated Fraud	Administrative	August 1, 2016

Table 3.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Egypt.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Gas Cylinders...Time bombs in Yemeni Houses	Administrative	July 10, 2018
2.	War Cholera	Medical	August 16, 2018
3.	Rituals in the Darkness	Legislative and judiciary	July 26, 2018
4.	Shaher Abdulhak's Tax Havens Violate International Law	Financial	July 22, 2018
5.	Merchants of the War	Medical	July 5, 2018
6.	Exchange Marriage in Yemen: A Time Bomb for Hundreds of Families	Legislative and judiciary	March 27, 2018
7.	Son of one of the Wealthiest Arabs lives in Sanaa to Escape his Crime in London	Abuse of power and political influence	March 20, 2018
8.	"I Have No Right in The Inheritance of My Father"	Legislative and judiciary	April 3, 2018
9.	Forgotten Students	Educational	January 19, 2018
10.	"Sons of the War "	Legislative and judiciary	December 13, 2017
11.	Repeated Fires at Unlicensed Gas Stations Claim Yemeni Lives	Administrative	October 12, 2017
12.	Death in the Clothes of Angels!!	Medical	November 21, 2017
13.	Children under the Guillotine... Execution by Sword and Bullets Shut Teams	Legislative and judiciary	October 29, 2017
14.	"Black Relief"	Legislative and Judiciary	August 9, 2017
15.	Slavery is Still Exists In Yemen: Segregation Between Masters and Slaves	Legislative and judiciary	March 2, 2017
16.	Pharmaceutical Drug Abuse	Medical	November 14, 2016
17.	Backdoor Companies of Hameed Al Ahmar	Abuse of power and political influence	November 13, 2016
18.	Panama Papers Expose Yemen's Wheat Emperor	Abuse of power and political influence	July 11, 2016
19.	Begging for Survival	Medical	October 17, 2016
20.	Yemen's Toxic Qat	Administrative	July 10, 2016
21.	The Mysterious Company of a Former Minister's Son	Abuse of power and political influence	October 9, 2016
22.	Yemen's Cancer Patients: the Fight for Medication	Medical	September 8, 2016
23.	Hidden Money of Abdul Haq Family in Yemen	Abuse of power and political influence	April 6, 2016
24.	Murder, Tax Evasion, Cronyism: Yemen's Sugar Kings Implicated in Panama Papers	Abuse of power and political influence	April 13, 2016
25.	Sana'a Child Beggar Mafias	Legislative and judiciary	January 28, 2016
26.	Digital Platforms Trap—Parties of the Conflict in Yemen Kill the Champions of the Media	Cyberbullying	No date

Table 4.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Yemen.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	“Killing in the Womb”	Medical	October 29, 2017
2.	Sick leave Market	Medical	January 9, 2017
3.	“Death Trucks”: Women’s Way to The Cultivated Land and Sometimes to the Grave or Permanent Disability	Legislative and judiciary	November 2, 2017
4.	Air Pollution in Tunisia	Legislative and judiciary	December 21, 2016
5.	Injustice Justification Granting Pension Fund’s Apartments to Ineligible Persons.	Administrative	December 20, 2016
6.	Punishing the Disabled	Legislative and judiciary	April 12, 2016
7.	Foreign Companies Dominate the Seeds Market in Tunisia	Agriculture	November 22, 2016
8.	The Next Death on the “Railroad”	Administrative	November 20, 2016
9.	(Towers of Horror) ... Communication Towers in Tunisia Randomly Spread Out	Administrative	October 25, 2016
10.	Tunisia’s Unpunished Child Molestation	Legislative and judiciary	July 10, 2016
11.	Torture in Tunisia	Legislative and judiciary	March 17, 2016

Table 5.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Tunisia.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Second Wife	Administrative	October 4, 2018
2.	Assad’s Relatives Seize the Territory of the Roman Army and Rent it to NATO	Abuse of power and political influence	March 21, 2018
3.	Deadly Scalpel	Medical	May 1, 2018
4.	Syria’s Fatherless Children	Legislative and judiciary	October 9, 2016
5.	Panama Papers: Who is Running Assad’s Sanctions-busting Network?	Abuse of power and political influence	April 6, 2016
6.	Men Around the President 1: Abdulkareem Network	Abuse of power and political influence	April 5, 2016
7.	Panama Papers Link Assad’s Fixer to Arms Dealers and Money Launderers	Abuse of power and political influence	April 14, 2016
8.	Men Around The President 2: Maruf and Alzayat... “Breaks” The Lion And The Arms Dealer	Abuse of power and political influence	April 13, 2016
9.	Pirates of the Mediterranean	Administrative	March 3, 2016
10.	Body Parts for Sale	Medical	January 27, 2016

Table 6.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Syria.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Government Negligence Delays Activating Alimony Fund for Seven Years	Administrative	July 16, 2017
2.	Compromised Innocence	Legislative and judiciary	September 21, 2016
3.	Teachers of Contracts of Acquiescence	Legislative and judiciary	April 9, 2016
4.	Defective Innocence: Who Compensates the Accused for Arrest after Being Acquitted?	Legislative and judiciary	August 21, 2016
5.	Tenders of Millions Value Go to Former Parliamentarians Pockets	Abuse of power and political influence	September 8, 2016
6.	Jordanian Figures Hiding Behind the Shadow of Tax Havens	Abuse of power and political influence	May 21, 2016
7.	An Engineer's Latest Rip Off	Administrative	August 3, 2016
8.	The Current Electoral System in Jordan Does Not Achieve Justice Between the Kingdom's Departments	Legislative and judiciary	January 19, 2016

Table 7.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Jordan.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Abbas to the Influential: "With Approval...No Objection on the Exemption"	Abuse of power and political influence	December 3, 2017
2.	Gaza (Disneyland)	Administrative	December 31, 2016
3.	Black Emissions	Environment	November 29, 2016
4.	The Season of Trees Execution	Environment	August 29, 2016
5.	Medicines of "the Ministry of Health" Are Sold in Pharmacies, Hundreds of Psychiatric Patients and Their Families are at Risk of Dying	Medical	February 7, 2016
6.	Diluting Diesel	Administrative	January 27, 2016

Table 8.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Palestine.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	ISIS Children	Legislative and judiciary	December 8, 2017
2.	The Vengeance of Suspended Projects Worsens ... and Kills!	Administrative	January 26, 2017
3.	Looking for a Suicidal Job in Iraq?	Administrative	December 21, 2016
4.	"Project No One"	Financial	November 18, 2017
5.	Caravan: a Deal at the Expense of Life of the Displaced People	Abuse of power and political influence	December 17, 2017
6.	Panama Papers Reveal Allawi's Hidden Companies	Abuse of power and political influence	May 11, 2016
7.	ISIS's Young Yazidi is Recruiting	Abuse of power and political influence	May 11, 2016

Table 9.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Iraq.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Mosac Fonseca To the Brother in Law of the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament: Where Do You Get This?	Abuse of power and political influence	June 21, 2018
2.	“State for Rent“	Abuse of power and political influence	April 17, 2018
3.	“Crimes of the Occasion”: Hidden Episodes of Violence in Lebanon	Legislative and judiciary	March 18, 2018
4.	Minors’ Marriage in Lebanon: Between the Rule of Sects and the Inability of the State	Legislative and judiciary	December 13, 2017
5.	“The Voice of the Earth... Southern lands are Public Domain”	Abuse of power and political influence	October 29, 2017
6.	“The Afflicted“	Legislative and Judiciary	November 25, 2016
7.	Failure to Enforce the Law Deprives Persons With Special Needs from Their Rights	Legislative and judiciary	December 5, 2016
8.	Video: Lebanon Documents of Panama—a Complete Episodes	Abuse of power and political influence	May 4, 2016
9.	From Mouth of the Lion	Financial	February 28, 2016

Table 10.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Lebanon.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	The Pressure of the Dust Suspended in the Air	Legislative/environmental	November 16, 2017
2.	Unlicensed Slaughterhouses...De Facto Coexistence	Legislative	November 8, 2017
3.	A Scream of Unconscious Person... When the Hospital Turns into a Pharmacy	Medical	July 12, 2016
4.	Bahrain’s Mental Health Hospitals Have Become Drug Stores	Medical	September 22, 2016
5.	Lost Ages and Wasted Rights	Administrative	June 21, 2016
6.	The Scammer... a Friend of Bahrain	Abuse of power and political influence	November 5, 2016
7.	Deceptive Virility	Administrative	April 1, 2016

Table 11.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in Bahrain.

No.	Country	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Mauritania	Living Dead	Legislative and judiciary	October 15, 2018
2.	Algeria	Panama Papers: Offshore Companies for the Wife of Chakib Khelil, Former Algerian Minister	Abuse of power and political influence	June 18, 2016
		Panama Papers: How the Algerian Elite Diverted Oil Money	Abuse of power and political influence	May 15, 2016
3.	Kuwait	Cheated Education: Research Papers for Sale at Kuwait University	Educational	November 2, 2017
4.	Sudan	In Sudan: “Living Between Feathers”	Abuse of power and political influence	November 7, 2017

Table 12.
Investigative reports on corruption issues in other Arab countries.

No.	Report headline	Type of corruption	Date of publication
1.	Five Companies Registered in the UAE Free Zones among the File of the Russian Laundry... Contradictory Bills and Iran Used One of These Companies to Evade Sanctions	Financial	No date
2.	UAE Companies Involve in Russian Laundry	Financial	December 19, 2017
3.	UAE Companies in The “Sink”... the Involvement of 13 Companies in the Largest File for the Laundering of Russian Money	Financial	November 30, 2017
4.	UAE-Based Enterprises Involved in Russian Laundry	Financial	December 6, 2017
5.	Whitening 25 Million Dollars Through Fake Projects and Bills.. 10 Arab Companies Outside The Coverage Of Telephone or Postal	Financial	December 6, 2017
6.	Nine Arab Companies are Involved in The Laundering of 10 Million Dollars in The Russian Laundry	Financial	January 23, 2017
7.	Fraud in Export of Sheep from Georgia to Arab Countries	Administrative	September 1, 2017
8.	I Do Not Want to Live With Him—I Have to Live With My Family	Legislative	No date

Table 13.
Investigative reports on more than one Arab country corruption issues.

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